



NEWS

Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice

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THIRD YEAR OF DJJ TRANSFORMATION SEES MAJOR IMPROVEMENTS AS RESULT OF EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICES

Number of juveniles entering system at all-time low; academic success sets records

Richmond, VA, Nov. 5 – Using evidence-based practices, research, and data to drive its decisions and actions, the Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) has seen all-time lows in the number of new offenses coming into the system in the last fiscal year. In its latest Transformation Report which was recently submitted to the General Assembly, DJJ outlines this and other successes achieved during the three years the agency has been undergoing its transformation.

Since formally announcing the kickoff of its transformation effort in 2015, DJJ leadership and staff, with the support of stakeholders, families, and elected officials, have:

- Closed two juvenile correctional centers, and safely reduced the population of youth in state facilities from an average daily population of 466 in FY 2015 to 216 in FY 2018. This was achieved through a combination of evidence-based efforts including reducing the length of stay for indeterminately committed youth, improving probation practices, and creating alternative placements.
- Reached all-time lows in several categories, including:
 - ✓ Juvenile intake cases (down 10.7%)
 - ✓ New probation cases (down 30.1%), with average daily population of probation cases down 38.9%
 - ✓ Detainments (down 20.2%)
 - ✓ Detention-eligible intake cases (down 17%)
- Raised the Standards of Learning (SOL) test pass rate every year for youth in DJJ's Yvonne B. Miller High School, as well as bringing the percentage of eligible seniors earning standard diplomas and other graduation credentials to record levels.
- Brought special education services into legal compliance. In the 2015-16 school year, a Virginia Department of Education audit found 52 compliance violations; by March 2017, the audit found only three.

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- Dramatically reduced the use of isolation and staff restraints at the JCC, while at the same time reducing the incidents of aggression by committed youth.
- Reinvested savings from the closure of two correctional centers into a statewide network and continuum of services, supports, and placements with more than 160 direct care providers serving 1,598 youth in 2017.
- Introduced evidence-based family intervention models, Multi-Systemic Therapy (MST) and Functional Family Therapy (FFT), that reach 113 of 133 (or 85%) of cities and counties in Virginia.
- Continued enhancing evidence-based probation practices, such as using cognitive-behavioral strategies and risk-based, assessment-driven case planning.
- Reduced the agency's vacancy rate from 23.9% in FY 16 to 8.8% as of August of this year, which is considerably less than the state average.
- Increased the number of family visits that occurred at the JCC and alternative placement sites by 90% just in the past year. In FY 2018, residents received 5,964 family visits.

"We are proud of the many successes DJJ has achieved in bringing our vision to fruition, including the unprecedented reductions in our juvenile populations over the past several years," said Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security Brian Moran. "As we celebrate this significant progress, it is important to highlight that DJJ has relied solely on the funds realized from re-purposing their now-closed facilities to sustain operations without seeking a budget increase. This demonstrates great stewardship of taxpayer dollars and the impact of reinvesting funds into community-based programs."

"While we are pleased to report the substantial progress our amazing staff has made in the first three years of our transformation, it's very important to stress that our work is not yet complete," said DJJ Director Andy Block. "It will take more time for these changes to become permanent fixtures of Virginia's juvenile justice system. It will require the continued support from all branches of government, as well as our stakeholders and volunteers who believe in the potential of every youth in Virginia."

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[Click on link below to read full report]

<http://www.djj.virginia.gov/pdf/admin/Transformation%20Update%202018%20FINAL.pdf>